

CONCEALABLE
**POCKET
PISTOLS**



**How to Choose and Use
Small-Caliber Handguns**

Terence McLeod

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POCKET PISTOLS

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How to Choose and Use Small-Caliber Handguns

Paladin Press • Boulder, Colorado

Terence McLeod

*Concealable Pocket Pistols:
How to Choose and Use Small-Caliber Handguns*
by Terence McLeod

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Printed in the United States of America

Published by Paladin Press, a division of
Paladin Enterprises, Inc.,
Gunbarrel Tech Center
7077 Winchester Circle
Boulder, Colorado 80301 USA
+1.303.443.7250

Direct inquiries and/or orders to the above address.

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Warning

FIREARMS ARE POTENTIALLY dangerous and must be handled responsibly by trainees and experienced shooters alike. The technical information presented here on firearms handling, training, and shooting inevitably reflects the author's beliefs and experience with particular firearms and training techniques under specific circumstances that the reader cannot duplicate exactly. Therefore, the information in this book is presented *for academic study only* and should be approached with great caution. This book is not intended to serve as a replacement for professional instruction under a qualified instructor.

It is the reader's responsibility to research and comply with all local, state, and federal laws pertaining to concealed firearms carry and the legal use of a firearm in self-defense.



Acknowledgments

SPECIAL THANKS to my favorite person, Sara Morgan, for her constant encouragement and professional advice.

More thanks to the following manufacturers who supplied me with photographs of their pocket pistols for inclusion in this book: Bryco Arms, Davis Industries, Jennings Firearms, Lorcin Engineering, Phoenix Arms, Sundance Industries.

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Preface

CONCEALABLE POCKET PISTOLS presumes the reader has a certain amount of training and/or familiarity with basic handgun function and handling and wants to adapt these skills to the specific handling needs that are unique to small-caliber semiautomatic pistols. The lack of readily available information on handling these pistols has been a deterrent to accomplishing this goal. *Concealable Pocket Pistols* was written to help fill that void. Specifically, it will show you:

- How to select the best American pocket auto pistols.
- How to cut through the advertising hype and select the best ammo available for small-caliber pistols.
- How to deal with the dilemma of safely carrying a concealed auto pistol in a ready-to-shoot condition.
- How to recognize and avoid life-threatening situations or, if necessary, shoot when your life depends on it.

But self-defense pistol information doesn't end on the last page of this book. Development of your self-defense capabilities by seeking additional advice from other sources is recommended:

- Many local police departments are sources of valuable information on personal security. They know your community inside and out and the specific dangers that threaten you. Their professional advice, through community outreach programs, on how to protect yourself at home, at work, in your car, and on the street should be integrated into your armed self-defense strategy.
- Most local shooting ranges or gun shops can recommend an instructor who is skilled in the self-defense use of the handgun. Many range clubs are also affiliated with the National Rifle Association. The NRA has a Personal Protection Program that is specifically designed to develop the skills needed to handle a handgun for self-defense.
- A high level of armed self-defense proficiency can be achieved by attending any of the growing number of facilities across the nation that offer realistic instruction by highly trained professionals. American Small Arms Academy, Gunsite Academy, Lethal Force Institute, and Thunder Ranch are some of the better known facilities. Gunsite has taken the extra step by making its tactical self-defense pistol training methods available on videotapes for those who are unable to travel to their facility in Arizona.

Preparing for the life-threatening encounter we hope will never occur is an ongoing process. Skills, once mastered, must be maintained by steady practice and reevaluation.

Introduction

SELF-PROTECTION IS THE reason why citizens arm themselves. In this increasingly savage society, the fundamental right to be able to defend one's life by carrying a concealed firearm has, in far too many places, been legislated out of existence. Even the right to own a gun is in jeopardy.

In fact, millions of Americans now feel they have been mugged not only by criminal thugs but by their own government. Despite the emergence of "the right-to-carry concealed weapons" laws in some states, the harsh reality is that approximately half of all adult Americans—many living in dangerous cities—are denied this fundamental right of self-defense. Any branch of government that is too crippled to defend its citizens and too afraid to allow them the right to defend themselves is one that has forfeited the moral right to tell them what they can and cannot do.

Today, more and more worried people are buying pistols from licensed dealers or are being forced to obtain them from irregular sources. In their own self-interest, these otherwise law-abiding citizens are ignoring any sanctions against concealed carry. They are carrying the weapon of their choice to defend their lives.

"Pocket pistols" are small, easily concealed, inexpensive, American-made, hammerless semiautomatic handguns in

.22, .25, .32, and .380 calibers. Although there are several other types of pocket pistols, the hammerless variety has always been the overwhelming best-seller. Owned by more civilians than any other type of concealable handgun, the small-caliber pocket auto is damned by the self-righteous gun control crowd and sneered at by gun aficionados. The people know better—they have bought millions of pocket pistols, and these guns have saved countless thousands of citizens from grievous bodily harm or death.

A REALISTIC LOOK AT SMALL-CALIBER POCKET AUTO PISTOLS: CAN THEY SAVE YOUR LIFE?

Hundreds of thousands of citizens carry a pocket auto pistol not as an offensive weapon but as a means of self-defense. By arming themselves with such a small-caliber weapon, their goal is to simply stop an attack and get out alive. They know that sometimes the only means to do this is to shoot—shoot not to scare, not to intimidate, not to wound, but shoot to stop the assailant. Killing is not the objective: stopping the attack is. If the assailant is killed, it is a consequence of his actions.

But can a .22, .25, .32, or .380 caliber pistol stop an assailant? Small-caliber pistols are routinely bum-rapped by elitists as being useless for self-defense. They insist that tiny bullets out of small guns have no “stopping power,” the only way to stop an attacker is to shoot to kill, and the only guarantee of being able to do this is with a big-caliber handgun. This is a persuasive argument.

As an instant-killing man-stopper, a small-caliber pistol is often a failure. But no handgun, even with magnum loads, can guarantee an instant kill. What a small-caliber pistol *can* do for you is stop an attack. The fact is, nobody wants a hole drilled into them. The pain and fear of being shot, even with tiny .22 or .25 bullets, *can* stop an assailant from carrying through with a life-threatening physical attack.

Pocket pistols are such big sellers because they are relatively inexpensive and, unlike big-caliber handguns, their recoil is more easily controlled. But the decisive reason why they are so popular is because they are easy to conceal and carry. A pocket auto pistol is a compromise in effectiveness that, for many, is offset by its ready availability. A small-caliber pistol in the pocket is better than the .357 Magnum left at home.

ARE POCKET AUTO PISTOLS RELIABLE?

Pocket auto pistols are often bad-mouthed as being unreliable. As these guns are often cheaply mass-produced, this criticism is to be expected. However, in spite of their “Saturday Night Special” reputation, most U.S. manufactured pocket auto pistols are reasonably well-made despite their often inexpensive price. Although most new pocket pistols are capable of functioning reliably out of the box, some first need to be wrung-out by shooting at least 50 rounds through them.

GUN SAFETY

A gun that fires when you don’t expect it is a chilling experience.

Hammerless pocket auto pistols can be confusing and dangerous to carry in a fire-ready condition, and they are far from simple to shoot under stress. Throughout this book, therefore, the need for safety precautions is stressed. These are not pro forma statements or the routine disclaimers of responsibility commonly found in writings on firearms use. These safety guidelines are specifically based on the potential danger you will be exposed to when handling and carrying a pocket pistol.

Many gun owners are unnerved by the rudimentary design of most pocket pistols. Confronted with the necessity of carrying one as a concealable primary or back-up weapon, many seasoned individuals (both civilian and law enforcement) are wary of a gun that does not conform to the safety standards and ease of handling they are used to, and well they should be.

As with all firearms, the only way a pocket pistol can be handled and carried safely is to know its limitations. The only way to know this is to understand how such a gun works and how it should be handled under all circumstances. And it is important to understand the potential dangers and to evaluate the degree of risk in carrying such a loaded weapon. All of these topics and more will be covered in detail in the following pages.



SECTION I

The Pistols and Their Ammunition

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CHAPTER 1

The Pocket Auto Pistol

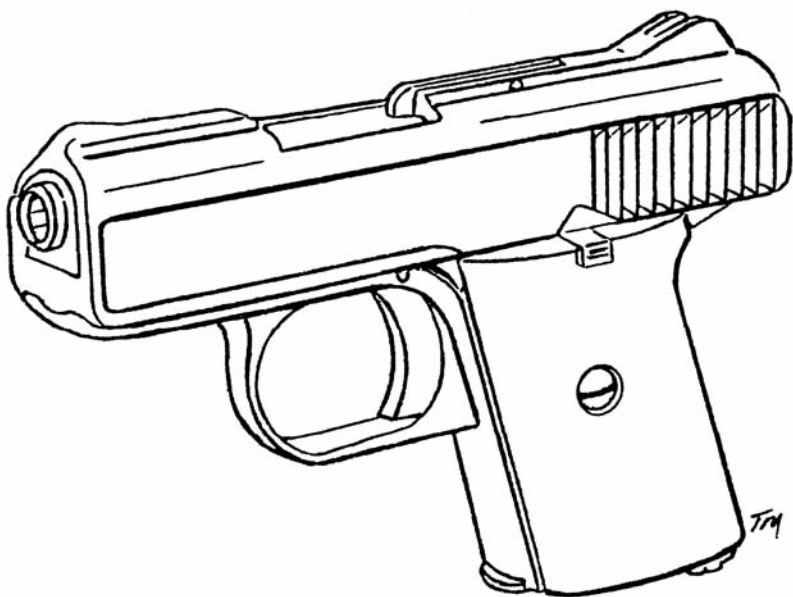
What It is and How It Works

THE FEATURES THAT distinguish the hammerless pocket auto pistol from most other handguns are its small size and the simplicity of its design. Because it uses relatively low-pressure ammunition, a pocket pistol can use a simple blowback action to contain cartridge pressure on ignition instead of the more complex and expensive locking systems needed on major-caliber autos. Its self-contained firing mechanism does not need a hammer to fire it. Dispensing with a space-consuming hammer mechanism is one of the reasons hammerless autos can be made pocket size and at less cost.

THE PISTOL

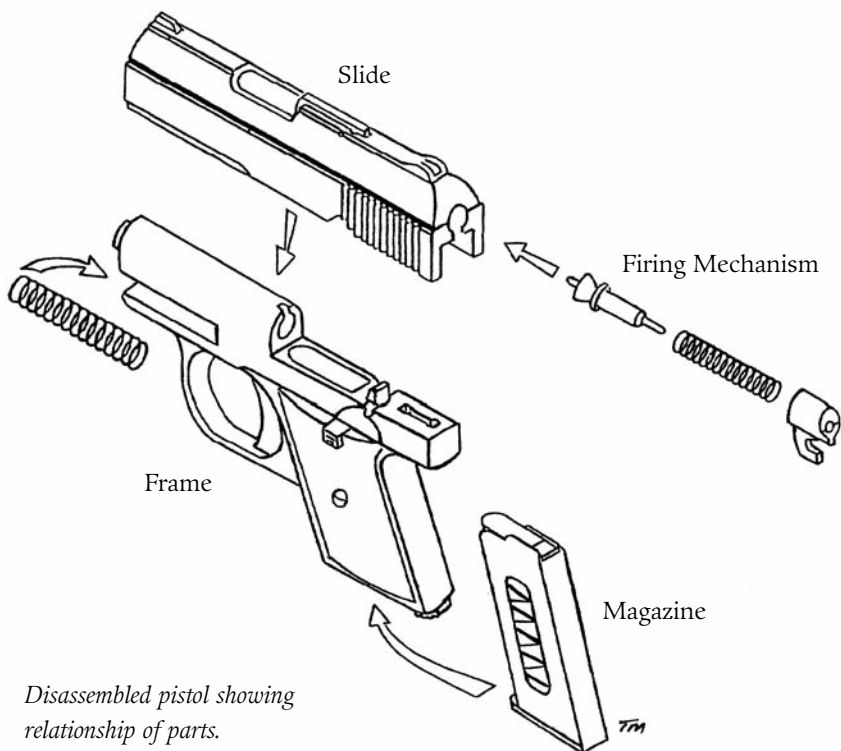
A hammerless pocket auto pistol can be separated into two basic parts: the frame and the slide.

The lower part of the pistol, which is the frame, holds the barrel, the trigger mechanism, and the thumb safety. A recoil spring is either wrapped around the barrel or fitted under it. The hollow butt (handle) part of the frame holds the pistol's other essential component: the removable ammunition magazine, often erroneously referred to as a "clip."



Assembled pistol.

The upper part of the pistol is the slide, which fits over the barrel and, as its name implies, slides back and forth on top of the frame when the weapon is fired. Fixed inside the rear part of the slide is a housing containing the firing mechanism. This mechanism, called the striker, is a special type of spring-propelled firing pin that works without being hit by a hammer. On many pistols, a small cocking indicator pin is posi-



tioned at the back of the slide. The top of the slide has a cut-out called the ejection port through which a fired cartridge case is ejected. The slide also has an extractor pinned to it as well as having fixed sights.

The magazine is a slim metal container closed at the bottom and open at the top. Inside the magazine is a spring and a follower that are compressed when cartridges are inserted.

HOW IT WORKS

A hammerless semiautomatic pocket pistol (Fig. 1) operates via the energy released by a fired cartridge. This energy performs all of the pistol's functions except pulling the trigger. In other words, all you have to do to shoot the pistol is pull the trigger each time you want the gun to fire—the pistol does all the rest of the work.

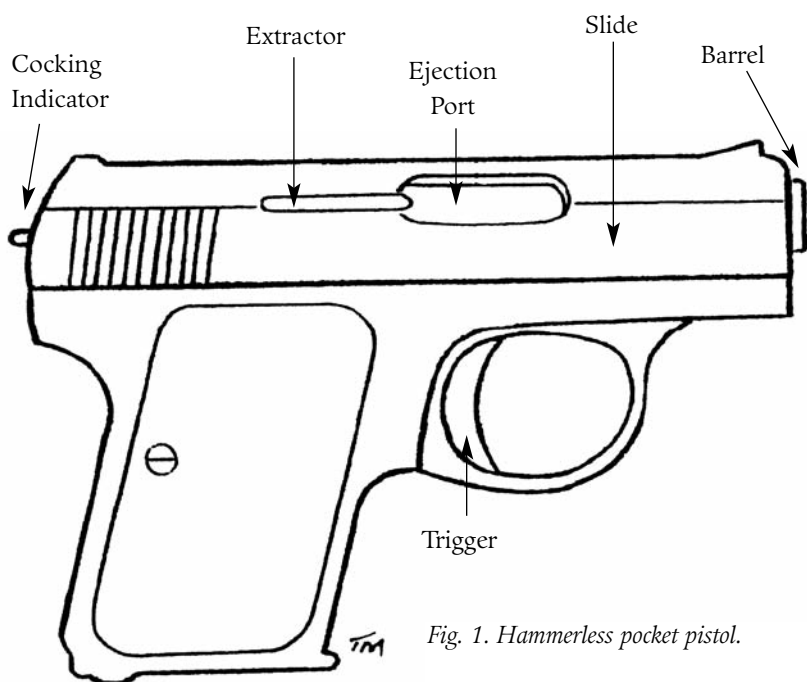


Fig. 1. Hammerless pocket pistol.

COCKED AND LOADED (Fig. 2): To prepare the pistol for firing, insert a loaded magazine in the magazine well, then cycle the slide with your nonshooting hand. This will close the breech face over the newly loaded round in the chamber and cock the pistol.

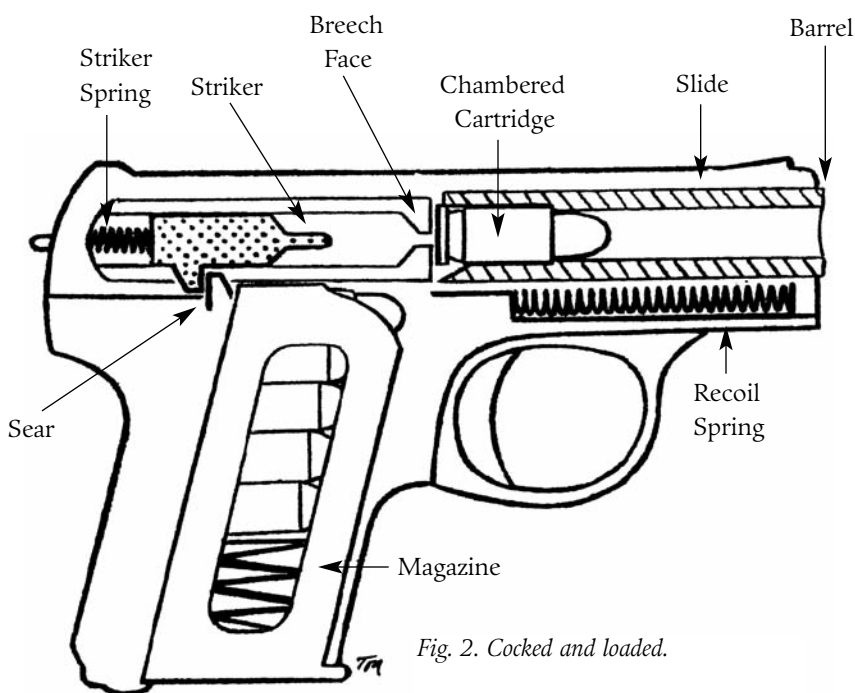


Fig. 2. Cocked and loaded.

FIRING (Fig. 3): Pulling the trigger acts on the sear to release the cocked, spring-loaded striker (firing pin) so that its tip is forced forward through a hole in the breech face to hit the primer contained in the head of the chambered cartridge. Activated by the striker's impact, the primer (a volatile compound) ignites the propellant powder in the cartridge case. This extremely fast-burning powder instantly creates expanding gas, the pressure of which forces the bullet out of the cartridge case and propels it down the pistol's barrel.

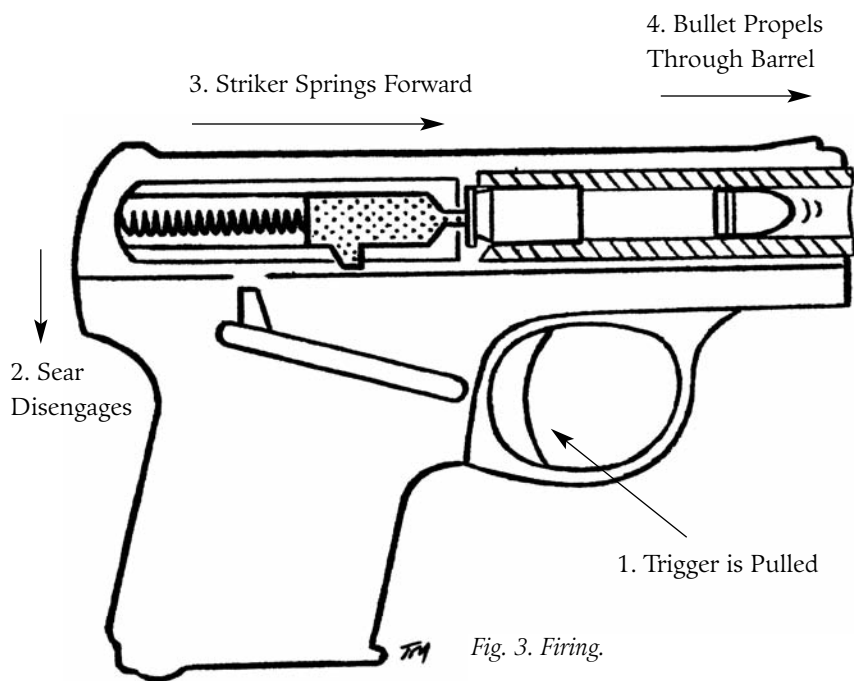


Fig. 3. Firing.

EXTRACTION AND EJECTION (Fig. 4): The instant the bullet leaves the barrel, gas pressure drops. Then residual gas blows the spent case back out of the chamber (extraction), pushing it against the slide's breech face and forcing the slide backward. Once the case is out of the chamber, it contacts the ejector, which flips it out through the moving slide's ejection port.

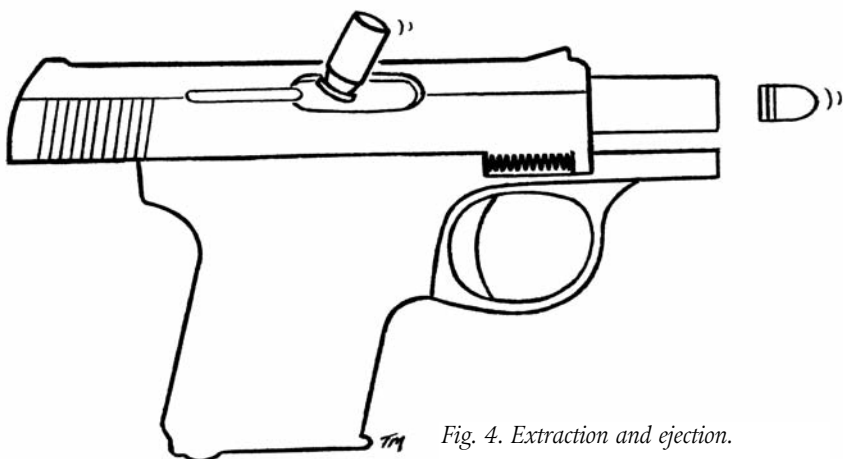


Fig. 4. Extraction and ejection.

COCKING (Fig. 5): As the slide is forced back, it pushes the striker back and compresses the striker's spring. The striker is then caught by the sear and held in the cocked position. If the pistol has a cocking indicator, it will be pushed back at this point so that it protrudes out the back of the slide after the slide closes. As the slide goes back, it also compresses the recoil spring.

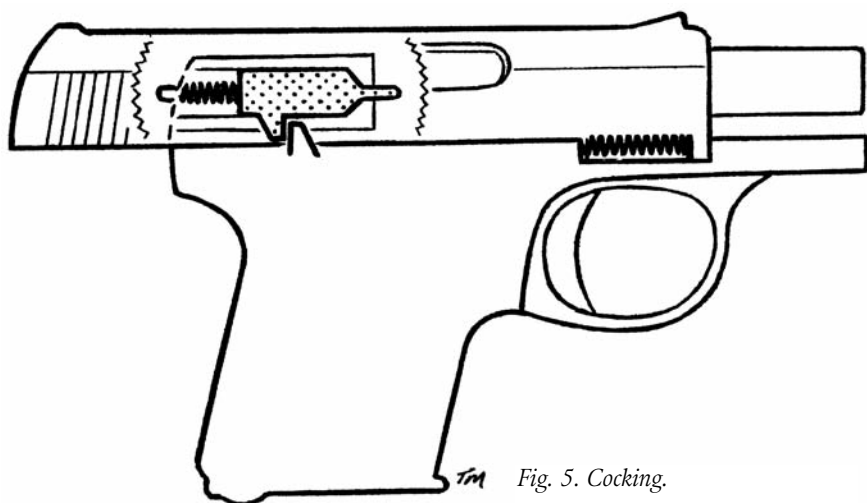


Fig. 5. Cocking.

RELOADING (Fig. 6): When the slide completes its backward movement on the frame, the energy from the compressed recoil spring is released and forces the slide forward to close. The pistol is reloaded by the closing slide when the bottom edge of the slide's breech face hits the exposed portion of the case head of the top round in the magazine and pushes it forward out from under the magazine's feed lips, up and over the feed ramp, and into the barrel's chamber.

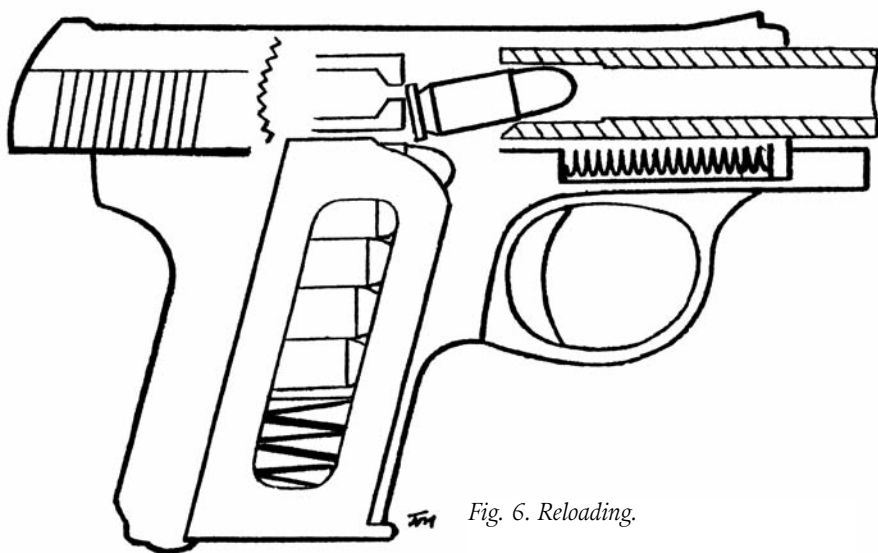


Fig. 6. Reloading.

At this stage, with the pistol cocked, the slide cycle is complete with the slide's breech face shut firmly against the head of the newly chambered cartridge (Fig. 7). This cycle occurs in a fraction of a second, and only the eagle-eyed will catch the slide's movement. This type of functioning, found in smaller caliber pistols, is aptly referred to as "blowback action."

After this cycle, the cocked, semiautomatic pocket pistol is ready to be fired again by simply pulling the trigger.

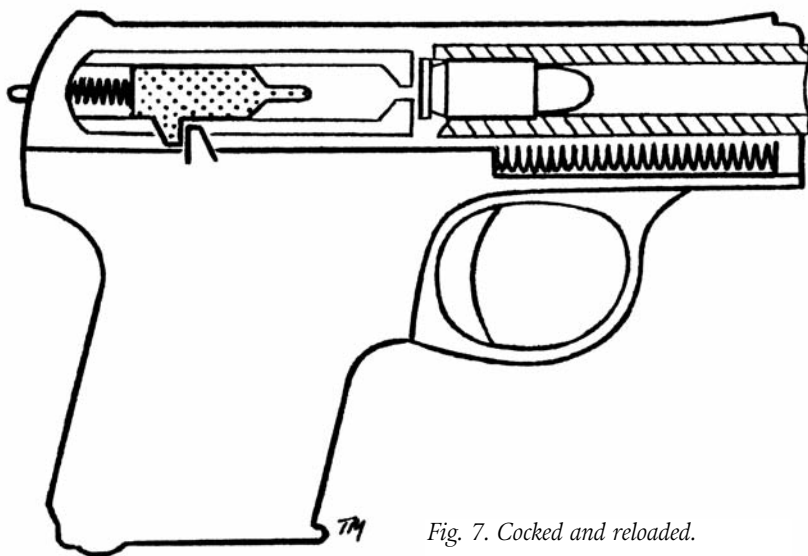


Fig. 7. Cocked and reloaded.

TAKEDOWN INSTRUCTIONS

Other than for the placement of the recoil spring, takedown and reassembly is identical for the Bryco, Davis, Jennings, Lorcin, Raven, and Sundance pistols discussed in Chapter 2.

The keyhole-shaped piece set flush in the back of the slide is the key to takedown. This button, or “retainer” as it is usually called, holds the striker and its spring in place in a channel in the rear part of the slide. It also has a hook that fits into the frame to anchor the slide. When the retainer is pushed in, it releases the slide from the frame.

Takedown Sequence

Make sure the pistol is unloaded and uncocked. (The new model Raven by Phoenix Arms needs the *empty* magazine in place to be able to pull the trigger to decock the striker. Remove the empty magazine after decocking.)

1. Push the retainer in as far as it will go (about 1/8 inch).
2. While keeping the retainer pressed in, lift up the rear of the slide and move it forward over the barrel and off the frame.
3. Carefully release the retainer, as it is under spring pressure.
4. The retainer, striker spring, and striker can now be taken out of the back of the slide. The recoil spring can be pulled off the barrel or out of the front of the frame, depending on the particular gun.

Reassembly is the reverse of the above. Note that the striker's shorter stem always faces the front.

CAUTION: To some degree, the thumb safety mechanism on all these pistols is held in place by the left grip. Some models seem more prone than others to letting parts fall out when the grips are off. Be aware of this, and always work over a clean, clear surface.

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CHAPTER 2

Buyer's Guide

Evaluation and Specifications of Recommended Pocket Pistols

FOR DECADES, until they were banned by the Gun Control Act of 1968, European-made pocket pistols flooded the American market. As a result of the import ban, a surprising number of American companies emerged to fill the increased demand for these small-caliber handguns.

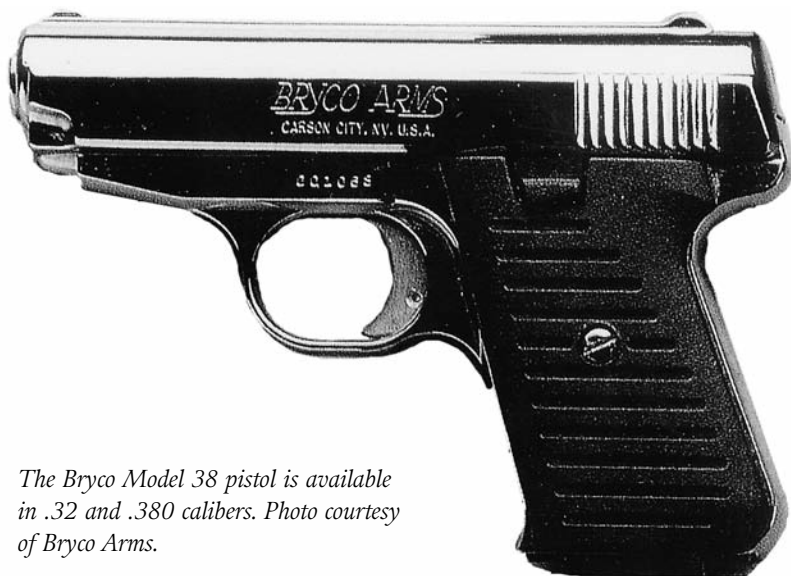
Some of these companies have manufactured a staggering quantity of pocket pistols. The Bryco, Davis, Jennings, Lorcin, Raven, and Sundance companies in particular have produced well over five million pocket pistols between them. These manufacturers have been able to meet the demand for an affordable self-defense weapon by using easy-to-manufacture, nonferrous alloy castings for slides, frames, and other parts. The resulting pistols share a proven, uncomplicated design that is economical for the manufacturer to produce. By keeping production costs to a minimum, they can sell the guns at rock-bottom prices. A budget price doesn't mean an inferior product—these pistols have a well-earned reputation for reliability.

RECOMMENDED POCKET PISTOLS

All of the pistols described below are recommended for concealed carry. Pistols in .22 and .25 calibers are the smallest and lightest and more easily concealed and carried in a

pants pocket. The .32 and .380 pistols are only marginally bigger and heavier and are still easy to conceal and carry, particularly in a jacket pocket.

Because these companies dominate the pocket pistol market, their guns, both new and used, are readily available nationwide. Used pistols are traded back and forth, over and under the counter. Many of these secondhand pistols have seen little use and are comparable to brand new guns.



The Bryco Model 38 pistol is available in .32 and .380 calibers. Photo courtesy of Bryco Arms.

Bryco Model 38

The Bryco Arms Model 38 is available in .32 and .380 calibers. Both pistols are identical in size and weight. It is the lightest, smallest, and most concealable of the .32s and .380s.

Specifications

Length: 5.3"

Height: 3.7"

Weight: 16 oz.

Magazine capacity: 6 rounds

Finishes: Blue, Chrome, Nickel



*The Jennings Model J-22 pistol
in .22 LR caliber. Photo courtesy
of Jennings Firearms.*

Jennings Model J-22

The Jennings J-22 has long been recognized as “the” reliable functioning .22 LR caliber pocket pistol.

Specifications

Length: 5"

Height: 3.2"

Weight: 13 oz.

Magazine capacity: 6 rounds

Finishes: Blue, Chrome, Nickel

Davis Models P-32 and P-380

The Davis .32 and .380 pistols are the biggest sellers in these calibers. Both of these sturdy pistols are the same size and weight. The P-32 has a six-round magazine capacity; the P-38 holds five rounds.

Specifications

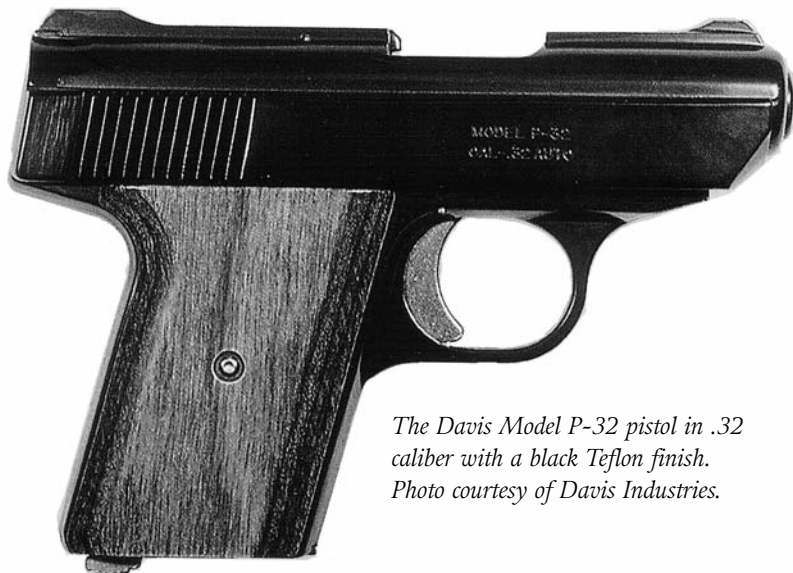
Length: 5.4"

Height: 4"

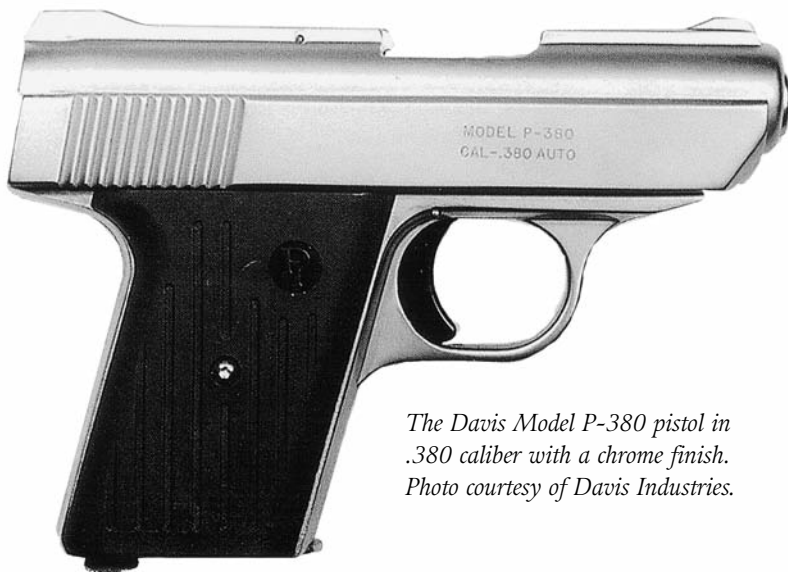
Weight: 22 oz.

Magazine capacity: 5/6 rounds

Finishes: Black Teflon, Chrome



*The Davis Model P-32 pistol in .32 caliber with a black Teflon finish.
Photo courtesy of Davis Industries.*



*The Davis Model P-380 pistol in .380 caliber with a chrome finish.
Photo courtesy of Davis Industries.*

Lorcin Models L22, L25, L32 and L380

Lorcin makes a full range of pocket pistols. The L32 and L380 are identical in size and weight. All Lorcin pistols are available in either a black Teflon or chrome finish.

Specifications

Model:	L22	L25	L32 & L380
Caliber:	.22 LR	.25	.32 & .380
Length:	5.25"	4.8"	6.6"
Height:	4.0"	3.8"	5.0"
Weight:	16 oz.	14.5 oz.	23 oz.
Magazine capacity:	9 rounds	7 rounds	7 rounds



The Lorcin Model L22 pistol in .22 LR caliber. Photo courtesy of Lorcin Engineering.



The Lorcin Model L380 pistol in .380 caliber. Lorcin's Model L32 in .32 caliber is the same design. Photo courtesy of Lorcin Engineering.

Sundance Models A-25, Boa, and Laser 25

Sundance Industries specializes in .25 caliber pocket pistols. Its basic model is the A-25. The Boa is essentially the A-25 fitted with a grip safety. The Laser 25 has a laser sight that is activated by the grip safety.

Specifications

Length: 4.9"

Height: 3.4"

Weight: 16 oz.

Magazine capacity: 7 rounds

Finishes: Black Teflon, Chrome



The Sundance Boa pistol in .25 caliber. Note the grip safety. Photo courtesy of Sundance Industries.



The Sundance Laser 25 in .25 caliber. Photo courtesy of Sundance Industries.



The Phoenix Arms Raven in .25 caliber. Photo courtesy of Phoenix Arms.

Raven .25

The Raven .25 is the most popular of pocket pistols, with more than two million sold in the past 30 years. The Raven's tried-and-true design is the foundation for the other manufacturers' pocket pistols. Originally made by Raven Arms, it is now produced by Phoenix Arms. Unlike the earlier Raven pistols, the current gun has a magazine safety.

Specifications

Length: 4.8"

Height: 3.5"

Weight: 15 oz.

Magazine capacity: 6 rounds

Finishes: Blue, Chrome, Nickel

CHAPTER 3

Ammunition

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

THE AMMUNITION YOU use could get you killed. Cheap, junk ammo can jam your pistol or cause it to misfire. At the other extreme, expensive “magic bullet” ammo could give you a false sense of security. If you think of your pistol as nothing more than a bullet launcher, it will be clear how important your choice of ammo is.

Cut-rate, poor-quality ammo is palmed off by many retail outlets and gun show dealers throughout the country. Be suspicious of any cheaply priced bargains—when it comes to ammunition, there is no such thing as a bargain. The major American manufacturers can barely keep up with the demand for quality ammo, and it is priced accordingly.

Cheap ammunition is usually made from inferior components on outdated machinery and with no quality control. Much of this stuff is originally foreign-made. After arriving in the United States, it is brokered to various companies that do nothing more than repackage it. The very real prospect of experiencing a misfire or jam in a confrontation when using inexpensive ammo is daunting. Simply put, it is foolish to try and save a few bucks on a box of unproven ammo from a no-name manufacturer when quality-controlled cartridges made by the major manufacturers are readily available.

If you're prepared to pay a lot more for exotic prefragmented "combat" ammunition—touted to be the ultimate man-stopper—you could still be at risk. This type of ammo can get you killed if you believe the hype and are under the illusion that you are almost invulnerable because the pistol you carry is loaded with "magic bullets." There is nothing more dangerous to a gun carrier than to think his self-defense capability is greater than it really is. This is especially true for pocket pistol owners, whose guns do not offer the full power of larger calibers.

In this market-driven economy, it is inevitable that you will be bombarded with sales spiels for ammunition that guarantees to give you "the edge." Because an informed customer is the huckster's worst enemy, we will wade through the promotion hype to see just how good this stuff is so that you, not the salesmen, will have the edge.

THE .22 LR ROUND

The most ubiquitous .22 rimfire ammunition, the .22 LR round, was invented in 1887, long before pocket auto pistols were introduced. It was designed to be used in rifles, hence the abbreviation LR for Long Rifle. It has always been America's most popular ammo for rifle and revolver use, and millions of rounds have been produced. The .22 LR round is a simple design, easy to manufacture, and very inexpensive.

The problem with the .22 LR cartridge case is that it has a pronounced rim that contains its primer, so this round is often not compatible for use in pocket auto pistols. Only a few companies have been able to design their pistols to function reliably with .22 LR rimfire ammo.

The .22 LR round that you will have the most success with is a high-velocity cartridge with a copper-plated round-nose bullet. There is also standard-velocity and hyper-velocity .22 LR ammo. One has too little velocity to cycle the slide; the other has too much. The copper-plated round-nose bullet is the most conducive to good auto pistol functioning. Avoid .22 ammo with other types of bullets such as plain lead, hollowpoint, and truncated cone.

Other types of .22 caliber rimfire ammunition include .22 Short, .22 Long, and .22 Win. Mag. None of these should be confused with the .22 LR/Long Rifle round used in some pocket auto pistols.

Almost every country in the world manufactures .22 LR ammo, and a lot of it washes up on our shores, often packaged to obscure its origins. This stuff invariably has an unacceptable ratio of duds per box. Buy American.

.25, .32, AND .380 CENTERFIRE HARDBALL AMMUNITION

“Hardball” rounds have a round-nose lead bullet that is covered with copper. This hard jacket ensures the bullet will not deform when being fed from the magazine into the chamber of an auto pistol and that it will produce good terminal penetration. This type of copper-clad round, known as full metal jacket (FMJ) or full metal case (FMC), was originally designed specifically for auto pistol use. Your pocket pistol should function reliably with them.

The three major U.S. ammunition manufacturers—Federal, Remington and Winchester—produce high-quality, reliable .25, .32, and .380 FMJ rounds that are distributed nationwide. In addition to their premium lines, each of these companies offers a budget-priced FMJ brand which is also quality-controlled and reliable.

Again, I strongly believe that you should select ammo from these well-known companies and ignore all no-name and imported stuff. These companies have a vested interest in your welfare—you can sue if they screw up. Do you think Czech, Hungarian, Mexican, or Russian manufacturers (often government controlled) care if, in a life-threatening encounter, you are left holding a pistol disabled by malfunctioning ammo? What about a fly-by-night company that may not even be in business by the time you may have to use your pistol in self-defense? Buy major American brands only! (To facilitate purchasing recommended ammo, manufacturer's stock/order numbers are given in the Appendix.)

HOLLOWPOINTS—AN IMPROVEMENT?

Hollowpoint rounds have a cavity in their bullet nose which makes them lighter and faster than hardball rounds. They are supposed to expand on impact with tissue, thereby having greater terminal effectiveness. However, due to the power constraints of small-caliber pistols, expansion of most hollowpoints is marginal at best—the guns simply do not propel the bullets with enough velocity to guarantee expansion upon impact. Also, due to the flattened shape of the bullet tip, hollowpoints will often not function reliably in a pocket auto pistol.

That said, if you are interested in hollowpoints, you should consider the following jacketed hollowpoint (JHP) rounds: Federal's Hydra-Shok in .32 and .380, Remington's Golden Saber in .380, or Winchester's Silvertip in .32 and .380. Any of these could be considered a small step up in performance over hardball, not because of their slight ability to expand but because they are less ricochet-prone than hardball. But take care that you do not succumb to the exaggerated claims, held by many, that hollowpoints are the last word in lethality.

PREFRAGMENTED AMMO— TODAY'S MAGIC BULLETS?

So pervasive is the constant touting of "exotic" prefragmented ammo by gun magazine writers, gun shop salesmen, and other gun owners who believe the hype, I know you will become aware of it (if you haven't already) and may be tempted to buy and carry it. Doing this could be dangerous to your health.

There are two major manufacturers of prefragmented ammo. They both incorporate the word "safe" in their product's name, referring to their non-ricochet design. These expensive, high-velocity rounds have bird or buckshot sealed in their bullets that is released on impact. Extraordinary claims for their man-stopping deadliness have been made in

print by shills touting this stuff (not necessarily by the manufacturers), to include the purported results of a European test on live animals that is either a hoax that got out of hand or a carefully planned PR campaign.

Fired into ballistic gelatin, these rounds result in awesome photography of “wound channels” the size of your fist. This visual presentation has by now become so entrenched in the gun press that most of us take it as a given that such gelatin “wounds” are the same as the real thing—as we conveniently ignore the existence of the human skeleton’s 200 bones.

In larger handgun calibers it is possible that prefragmented ammo may do what its advocates say it can. However in .25 and .32 calibers, short of shooting an attacker with it, I have been unable to realize any of its self-defense qualities at all. I can’t get it to penetrate pine boards. Even more telling, tested at 10 feet on already downed ducks and turkeys, it could not overcome feather protection. It is true that the “body armor” on these birds will often defeat a .410 shotgun, but it seems to me that a bullet has to get under the skin before it can do damage! Faced with an antisocial biker in a heavy leather jacket, will a quasi mini-buckshot load help you? (In .380 caliber penetration is better but not assured.)

As there is no bona fide proof that this stuff can save your life, you are back to square one—good old reliable FMJ hardball.

BUYING AMMUNITION

In many states, buying ammunition over the counter at gun and sporting goods stores is simple and hassle-free—all you need is a driver’s license for I.D. But there are still many places where ammo sales are strictly regulated.

With American manufacturers pumping out millions of rounds of commercial ammo a year, it would seem ludicrous for the gun haters to attempt to police ammo sales. The same state and local authorities that harass your right to own a handgun also restrict your access to ammunition. This can be

as irritating as extra paperwork at point of sale or as restrictive as limiting the ammo you can buy to the caliber of gun for which you have a legal license.

Many gun owners subjected to such restrictions are forced to look elsewhere. Fortunately for them (and for arm-chair shoppers in general), ammo can be easily bought through the mail.

Interstate shipping of ammo to an individual anywhere in the continental United States is no longer prohibited, and there are numerous mail order ammo houses (some with good discounts) that can ship directly by UPS to a street address but not to a post office box. UPS requires a signature upon delivery.

Federal law allows anyone to buy ammo from a mail order source who is not prohibited by local, state, or federal statutes from purchasing a firearm. Mail order suppliers usually require that you sign a short statement on the order form (for their records only) that you are 21 or over and that there are no legal restrictions against you buying ammo. A few companies ask for a photocopy of your driver's license as well.

This lack of red tape should allow most pocket pistol owners to stock up on the best available ammo for their needs—and I do mean stock up! Depending on the prevailing level of hysteria, federal law can change in a hurry. Already there is congressional agitation to ban the manufacture of centerfire ammunition in pocket pistol calibers and/or to impose absurd taxes (10,000 percent) on ammo sales. It might not take much of a change in the climate for this to become a reality. Stock up now while you have the chance!

CHAPTER 4

Quick Reference Data

ALTHOUGH THE FOLLOWING are general firearms terms, many of the definitions are specifically applicable to pocket pistols.

AMMUNITION: The .22 caliber pistol uses the .22 LR/Long Rifle rimfire round. This cartridge has its primer contained in its rim. The .25, .32, and .380 auto rounds are the centerfire type with their primer set flush in the center of their rimless or semirimmed case head. The centerfire hardball round has a copper-clad round-nose bullet (full metal jacket). The hollowpoint round has a lighter bullet with a recessed tip. There are also several types of “exotic” cartridges with unusual bullet designs. (See also **CALIBER** and **CARTRIDGE**.)

BARREL: A 2 to 3 inch rifled tube through which a fired bullet is propelled. The open front end is the muzzle. The back end is the slightly enlarged chamber section into which a cartridge is loaded.

BLOWBACK ACTION: A simple functioning design found in pistols that use small caliber, relatively low-pressure ammunition. (See also **RECOIL SPRING**.)

BREECH FACE: The front area of the rear portion of the inside of the slide which presses up against the case head

of a chambered round when the slide is closed. There is a hole in the breech face through which the striker's firing pin tip can protrude to fire a chambered round.

BULLET: See CARTRIDGE.

BUTT (GRIP): The handle part of the pistol's frame that is gripped by the shooter. The butt is hollow with an opening at the bottom, called the magazine well, into which the magazine is inserted. The front and the back of the grip frame are called the frontstrap and the backstrap, respectively.

CALIBER: The nominal measurement of the inside diameter of the pistol's barrel (the bore) and therefore the caliber designation of the cartridge to be used. The caliber of American-made pocket pistols and ammo is expressed as a decimal: e.g., 1/4 inch = .25 caliber.

CARTRIDGE: A self-contained unit of ammunition. It has two joined parts: the bullet and the cartridge case. The case contains propellant powder and primer. When the cartridge is fired from a semiautomatic pistol, the bullet separates from the case and is propelled out the barrel. The empty case is ejected through the ejection port.

CHAMBER: See BARREL.

CHAMBERING: Loading a cartridge from the magazine into the chamber part of the barrel.

CLIP: See MAGAZINE.

COCK: The manual or automatic backward movement of the slide that pushes the striker back to be held by the sear so that the pistol is in a condition to be fired.

COCKING INDICATOR: A small piece that sticks out of the back of the pistol when it is cocked.

EJECTION PORT: An opening in the slide through which a fired cartridge case or an unfired round is ejected.

EJECTOR: On hammerless pistols, the tip of the striker is utilized as an ejector. When the slide is in full recoil, this tip is forced through a hole in the breech face to contact the fired case and flip it out through the ejection port.

EXTRACTOR: A small claw-shaped device set into the slide

near the ejection port that grasps the extractor groove of a chambered round. Contrary to popular belief, an extractor is not necessary for semiautomatic firing function of a small blowback pistol. Its true function is to extract an unfired round or a stuck, fired case.

FEED RAMP: A short, angled, dished-out ramp that guides a round from the magazine into the chamber. It is formed on the lower part of the barrel's chamber mouth.

FIRING PIN: The pointed stem on the front of the striker unit that hits the cartridge primer and fires the round. (See also **STRIKER**.)

FRAME: The lower part of the pistol upon which the movable slide functions. The frame contains the trigger mechanism, the fixed barrel, the recoil spring, and the thumb safety. The butt is part of the frame.

GRIPS: Wood or synthetic panels attached to the butt with screws. They should be checkered or serrated to provide a non-slip grip. Also called **STOCKS**.

MAGAZINE: A thin, spring-loaded container in which cartridges are stacked one on top of another. The removable magazine fits into the magazine well in the pistol's butt. Often erroneously called a **CLIP**.

MAGAZINE CATCH/RELEASE: A device that holds the magazine in the pistol's butt. To release the magazine, a bottom-of-the-butt type catch is pivoted back. Some pistols have a button-type catch on the left grip, which is pushed in to release the magazine.

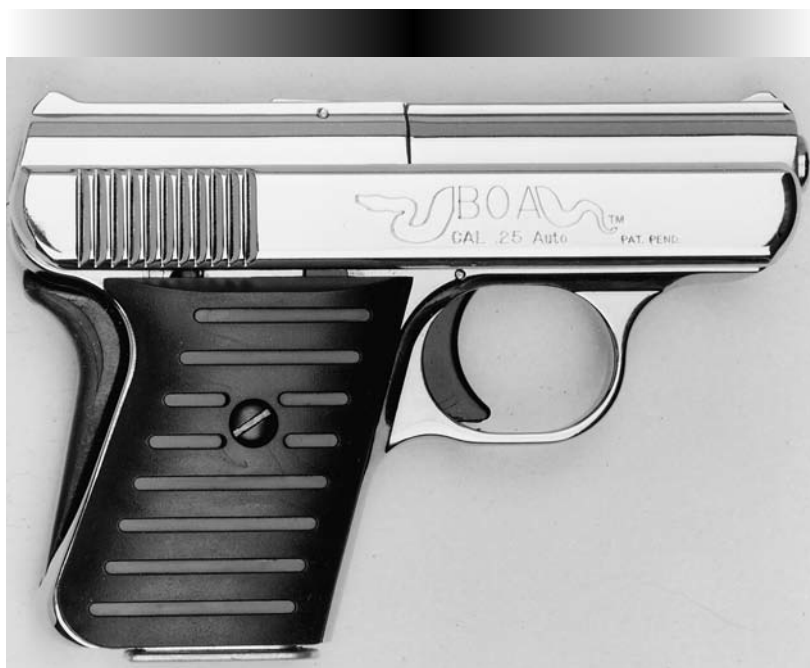
MAGAZINE WELL: See **BUTT**.

MUZZLE: See **BARREL**.

RECOIL SPRING: In conjunction with the striker spring and the slide's weight, the recoil spring is calibrated to ensure enough resistance to keep the slide closed at the moment of firing, yet after opening has the energy to force the slide to close (see **BLOWBACK ACTION**). This removable coiled spring fits either around the barrel or under it.

SAFETY (GRIP): The grip safety is fitted into the backstrap of the pistol's butt-frame. It is a secondary safety device that

- is automatically activated when the pistol is cocked. It is disengaged when it is pressed in by gripping the pistol.
- SAFETY (MAGAZINE):** The magazine safety is a built-in device that disables the pistol if the magazine is removed. With the magazine out of the gun and with a forgotten live round in the chamber, the gun will not fire if the trigger is pulled.
- SAFETY (THUMB):** On many pistols, the thumb safety is the only user-activated safety device. When it is put on, the thumb safety blocks the sear, preventing the pistol from being fired.
- SEAR:** An intermediate part of the firing mechanism between the trigger unit and the striker. The sear holds the striker in the cocked position. When a cocked pistol's trigger is pulled, the sear disengages to let the striker fly forward to fire the pistol.
- SIGHTS:** On small pistols, sights are rudimentary at best. The idea is to line up the front sight with the notch in the rear sight.
- SINGLE-ACTION (SA):** An early firearms term for a handgun that has to be cocked before a trigger pull can fire it. All hammerless (striker-fired) pocket auto pistols featured in this book are single action.
- SLIDE:** The upper part of the pistol which, on firing, slides back and forth on the frame to operate the pistol. The rear part of the slide houses the firing unit (the striker). The slide can be removed from the frame for cleaning.
- SLIDE CYCLE:** The opening and closing of the pistol; that is, the backward and forward movement of the slide when the pistol is fired or when the slide is operated by hand.
- STRIKER:** A special type of spring-propelled firing pin assembly used in hammerless (striker-fired) pistols.
- TRIGGER:** The part of the firing mechanism that is manipulated by the shooter. When pulled, the trigger disengages the sear, which activates the striker to fire the pistol.
- TRIGGER GUARD:** The part of the frame that guards the trigger from being accidentally caught and pulled.



SECTION II

The Real World

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CHAPTER 5

Shooting Pocket Pistols

YOU CAN'T LEARN TO shoot from a book, but most gun owners can teach themselves to shoot fairly accurately with just a few range sessions. However, there are a few distinct problems you will encounter when shooting small pocket pistols.

GETTING A STRONG GRIP

The main problem with small pocket pistols is being able to get a good grip so you can control recoil and avoid slide bite. Whether you have big hands or small hands, you still have to hold onto an instrument that explodes at the end of your arms. If you repeatedly practice gripping an unloaded pistol, you will be able to acquire a secure grip that feels right for you.

CONTROLLING RECOIL

Recoil is any movement in the shooter's hand upon firing. Most think of it as the backward thrust (kick) of the gun's butt into the web of the hand. However, if the pistol is hard to grip, it will also twist in the hand.

Shooters of full-size, large-caliber autos are often surprised the first time they shoot a pocket pistol. Whereas a 9mm service pistol is infinitely more powerful than a pocket pistol, it also has greater mass, weight, and grip size, which all aid in controlling the gun's recoil. A pocket pistol, even with its low-power ammo, can be a challenge to control.

A strong grip will control recoil with any pocket pistol. Unfortunately, it's not easy to get a good, strong grip on some pocket pistols. A small pistol butt that allows only one and a half fingers to grip the frontstrap without pushing the hand up into the slide's path can make control of some mini guns a problem. Also, if the gun is not held firmly (i.e., if it is "limp wristed") some of the "good" recoil necessary to cycle the slide will be dissipated because the entire gun will move rather than provide resistance against the slide's backward momentum at discharge. This will cause the pistol to jam.

AVOIDING SLIDE BITE

If your hand is pushed up against the slide to get a better grip, the web or thumb can get scraped by the cycling slide. Worse yet, if there is hand contact with the slide, the slide cycle can be impeded, causing a jam.

A painless way to avoid slide bite is to grip the unloaded pistol in the normal fashion, then hand-cycle the slide a few times. You'll be able to tell if your grip is making contact with the slide. If it is, you can make any necessary adjustments.

OVERCOMING A STIFF TRIGGER

Triggers on many pocket pistols are stiff, gritty, and hard to pull. In one respect this shortcoming is to the carrier's advantage, as there is less chance of an accidental discharge if the trigger requires a deliberate hard tug.

If you find the trigger on your pocket pistol is hard to pull, you will be inclined to yank on it. Doing this will more than likely cause the gun to move before the shot is fired, ruining

your aim. Marksmen insist that a trigger is *squeezed*, not pulled. By squeezing rather than pulling, you will notice two improvements in your trigger control:

1. Your trigger finger will move (squeeze) straight back instead of pushing to one side and forcing the gun to move.
2. With a squeezing motion you will be able to exert considerably greater finger pressure to overcome the resistance of a stiff trigger.

Remember, the trigger finger has to do all the work and is the only thing that should move. If the wrists and hands remain locked and steady, so will the pistol.

PRACTICING SELF-DEFENSE SHOOTING

Because your pocket pistol is strictly a self-defense weapon, you would only use it at a short distance from an attacker—when he is so close that you are otherwise unable to evade him. If there is sufficient distance between you and a potential assailant, you should be looking for avenues of escape, not opportunities to shoot.

Ideally you should practice self-defense shooting at close range, but this may not always be possible. If you are shooting at a commercial or law enforcement range, make sure you are aware of all of its safety rules. At an outdoor range you could be restricted to shooting at a fixed distance from your target (no less than 25 yards, for example). Indoor ranges usually have targets the shooter can set at variable distances but, depending on the mechanism's deflector design, it could pose a safety hazard if moved in too close. Check with the range officer first, and remember, his word is final.

Whether or not you are able to shoot at realistic self-defense distances, use a human silhouette paper target (available at most ranges) instead of the bull's-eye type. With a man-size target you can concentrate on aiming at the large

torso area, which is the only practical part of the body to hope to hit in the fear and chaos of a real-life attack. Shooting at a bull's-eye target is the equivalent of aiming at the head. Hitting a moving head in a confrontation would be mere luck, regardless of the practice you had put in.

Although you must learn to shoot one-handed with your pistol held close to your body, you should first get used to shooting with the more conventional two-handed grip and a target stance for maximum control and confidence.

Stance

Adopt a straight-ahead shooting stance and grip the pistol with two hands. Face the target with your feet spread, then stick your arms straight out in front of you. Don't bend your wrists. Your pistol, wrists, and arms should be one straight unit. It is this entire unit that is moved to eye level to aim.

Aimed Shooting

Sights on pocket pistols are minimal at best, but they have to be used to aim if you expect to hit anything that isn't right on top of you. Aimed shooting is needed if you have to hit an assailant at even relatively short distances, such as across a room. After you have ingrained the skills of aimed fire through diligent practice, you can then learn how to shoot at very close range without aiming.

The key to aiming a pistol is to always focus on the front sight. If, when sighting along the top of the slide, the front sight is on target as well as being evenly positioned horizontally and vertically in the rear sight notch, the bullet will find its mark. Practice aimed shooting with a two-handed grip at distances of 10 to no more than 25 yards.

Up-Close Point Shooting

Countering an up-close, in-your-face assault calls for a radically different approach—you need to shoot one-handed. You do not stick your arm out to aim because an assailant could deflect your arm or grab and gain control of your weapon.

Rather, your gun is kept close to your body. Your elbow is tucked into your side with your hand and gun pointing from waist level at your assailant's bulk. You face your attacker straight on so that you and your gun point directly at him.

These are the actions you need to practice. "Pointing" is the key. At close range, pointing your pistol as an extension of your index finger is almost as accurate as sighted aiming.

Reacting to Gun Blasts

Small-caliber pistols *do* make loud noises. Not as pounding and window-rattling as a 9mm or .45, but loud nevertheless. When wearing ear protection in the controlled environment of an indoor or outdoor firing range, the bang is of no consequence. But, when shooting in an uncontrolled environment without ear protection, it could be a problem.

On the street during the day, a shot from a small pistol might not sound as loud as a firecracker. If there is a lot of street noise, it might not even be recognized as a gun shot. At night, gun shots are louder. If surrounded by tall buildings, the report ricochets and is amplified.

Indoors, gun shots are *loud*. The more enclosed the space, the louder the noise. Inside a room, only the deaf would miss the blast; in an elevator or automobile, the blast is deafening and disorienting.

Although ear and eye protection is mandatory at any official shooting range, you should occasionally fire a few rounds, both inside and out, without ear protection. I know that repeated exposure to gunfire does lead to hearing loss, but you need to develop some degree of familiarity and tolerance to real gun shots so that you will not be handicapped by gun blasts in a live encounter.

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CHAPTER 6

Dealing with Malfunctions

MOST POCKET PISTOL malfunctions are the result of feed jams, extraction jams, or ejection jams. These are usually caused by the stiff newness of the pistol, fired powder residue left in the chamber, or sometimes by inadequate recoil spring pressure.

Many new pocket pistols will jam from time to time until they are thoroughly broken in by shooting at least 50 rounds through them. During this breaking-in period, all you need to be concerned about is clearing any jams that occur so that you can continue shooting. Your pistol will eventually smooth out and function with total reliability. If it does not, contact a qualified gunsmith or send it back to the manufacturer for repair or exchange.

These types of jams can also be shooter-induced. If the auto slide cycle is out of sync, the pistol will jam. This can occur for two reasons: (1) the slide's function can be slowed down if the shooter's gun hand comes in contact with the slide as it cycles; or (2) if the pistol is "limp-wristed" and not gripped firmly, some of the recoil needed for the slide to cycle properly is dissipated.

FEED JAMS

When the slide is pulled back and released to load the first round or when the slide automatically cycles after firing, it should feed a round from the magazine into the barrel's chamber. If the round jams and fails to feed and chamber, the slide can't close completely and the pistol remains disconnected and inoperable.

If the round has completely missed the chamber and is hung up at the chamber's mouth, remove the magazine, hold the slide back, and shake the round out through either the ejection port or the open magazine well.

If the round is partially in the chamber, you can often force it home by manually pushing the slide shut. Shooters of hammer-fired autos will be accustomed to rapping the back of the slide with the heel of their hand to force the slide to close. Don't do this with a hammerless pocket pistol, especially one with a cocking indicator. Instead, grip the slide serrations and push forward.

If fired powder is allowed to build up in the chamber, it will stop the round from completely chambering. Keep the chamber clean. If the chamber is clean and failure to fully seat a round is persistent or if the round continues to miss the chamber, the recoil spring might not have the impetus needed to force the slide shut. Try a replacement recoil spring. A weakly held pistol can also cause feed jams.

EXTRACTION (AND DOUBLE FEED) JAMS

An extraction jam occurs when a fired case sticks in the chamber and is not extracted and ejected when the slide cycles. If this is not the last round in the pistol and another round is attempting to enter the blocked chamber, it will cause a "double-feed" jam as well.

With the slide held back, get the magazine with its partially released top round out of the pistol. Then let the slide

slam shut so the extractor firmly hooks over the stuck case in the chamber. Pull the slide back again to extract and eject the culprit.

A dirty chamber is the usual cause of extraction jams. When a hot, expanded fired brass case reacts to powder deposits left in the chamber, the result is a “glued” case. Again, keep the chamber clean. If the gun is clean, check to see if the extractor is broken.

EJECTION JAMS

Ejection jams occur when a fired case is extracted from the chamber but fails to eject and gets trapped in the slide’s ejection port. To remedy this, remove the magazine, hold the slide back, and shake or pick the case out. Ejection jams are almost always self-inflicted by the shooter limp-wristing the pistol. Keep a firm grip on the pistol.

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How to Carry a Concealed Pistol

“CONCEALED CARRY” HAS different meanings for various groups. For plainclothes law enforcement it can be nothing more than carrying a gun in a belt holster covered by a jacket. This type of concealment is perfunctory at best and, although in the course of their mundane duties most plainclothes cops don’t flash their guns in public, does it matter if they do expose their weapon? After all, they are the law.

Undercover cops will usually want a much greater degree of concealment, sometimes to the degree that nothing short of a strip search will reveal their weapon. After all, they don’t want to be known as the law.

The legally licensed-to-carry civilian fits somewhere in between. Although a concealed weapons permit bestows the right to carry, it does not allow broadcasting the fact—the weapon must be concealed at all times.

Both licensed and unlicensed civilians are often chagrined to find that their choice of a carry gun sometimes is too big and heavy to be concealed in a pocket. They then find that for adequate concealment (depending on the occasion and the season), they have to resort to strapping their weapon somewhere on their body under clothing, often making it next to impossible to get it into action quickly. They find they have solved the problem of concealing and transporting the weapon at the expense of its usefulness.

This is where the true pocket-size pistol comes into its own. It is small and light enough to be carried in total concealment in a pants or jacket pocket—the pockets that offer you instant access to your weapon in an emergency.

ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

It's a given in law enforcement that the only place a gun should be when there is the possibility of danger is in one's hand. Without the vested authority of a cop, a civilian doesn't have this luxury—the weapon must be kept concealed until the penultimate moment. If this means having to dive into a pocket at the last second, grab the gun, and pull it out, this moment will be too late.

What's more, if the pistol is carried in a condition that requires jacking a slide to load before it can be fired, then there is definitely not going to be enough seconds in a moment to guarantee survival. It doesn't take a time and motion study to figure out that fewer movements equals quicker response.

The essential requirements for concealed carry with a pocket pistol are that the carrier has to be able to unobtrusively and securely grip the pistol in the pocket, keep it gripped and concealed until the second it has to be drawn, and then be able to instantly withdraw it from the pocket without impediment.

The need to, for example, unobtrusively walk a dangerous city block with your hand on the gun in your pocket excludes carrying the gun in an inside jacket pocket or in the hip (wallet) pocket. The pants, jacket, coat, or woman's skirt pocket on the gun-hand side are the only practical pockets for pistol carry.

Never have anything else in the pocket you carry your gun in. No tissues, no bills or small change, no keys, no pocket knife, no nothing but your gun! Any extraneous stuff in your pocket can snag on your pistol, slowing down or defeating entirely your ability to get the pistol out of your pocket. And keep the pocket free of lint—it could work its way into the

slide or firing mechanism and jam the weapon at a crucial moment, thereby contributing to your early demise.

CONCEALMENT PRECAUTIONS

Even though small-caliber pistols are small enough to fit in a pocket, precautions need to be taken to guarantee concealment, especially if carried in a pants pocket.

Regardless of physique or style of pants, some people always find that their gun “prints”—i.e., its outline is evident on the outside of the pants. A tried-and-true remedy is a thin but sturdy, pliable piece of material (cardboard, leather, vinyl) cut to the inside size of a pants pocket. Worn in the pocket between the gun and the pants, it will break up the gun’s shape so it won’t print if the pants are stretched against the gun. To ensure a snag-free presentation of the pistol, stitch the entire insert to the pocket.

Sure, it looks as though you have something in your pocket—after all, that’s what pockets are for—but it doesn’t look like you have a you-know-what in your pocket.

CARRYING PRECAUTIONS

Having a snag-free pocket to carry the pistol in is the first carry requirement. The other two are keeping the pistol positioned in the pocket for an easy draw, and securing the pistol so that it can’t slip out of the pocket.

Stabilizing the Pistol

Keeping a pistol from moving around in a pants or jacket pocket is a problem. Whether you are standing or sitting, the pistol should stay in the pocket in the same position, with the muzzle pointing at the bottom of the pocket and the butt in position to be grasped easily. The smaller the pistol the easier it is for it to move into a horizontal position. If this happens, the gun can become wedged in the pocket, making it difficult to get a grip on.

This problem can be avoided by carrying your pistol in a pocket holster. Most of the available models do a good job of keeping the gun in position. My favorite is the Uncle Mike's Sidekick Inside-the-Pocket Holster. Made of soft synthetic material, this holster is comfortable for pants pocket carry. Its unique design makes it remain in place in the pocket when the gun is drawn—a requirement that is not always met by other holsters.

Also from Uncle Mike's, the Universal Slip-On Grips solve the problem of getting a good grip with sweaty hands. I find these very inexpensive rubber grips, which are easily stretched over the pistol's regular grips, to be indispensable. They can also be trimmed to fit pistols such as the Sundance that have a button magazine release. (Uncle Mike's products are available from Michaels of Oregon, 1710 Red Soils Court, Oregon City, OR, 97045.)

Securing the Pistol

The other problem with pocket carry is restraining the pistol. It's easy to forget that you are carrying a light, small gun. If it's not anchored in the pocket, you can very easily lose it. Lifting up your leg or even just sitting down can be enough to cause a gun to slip out of a pants pocket. Running and jumping or the simple act of casually taking off a jacket can let a pistol bounce out of the pocket.

Only a pistol that is tightly fitted or strapped into a pocket holster that is also anchored in the pocket can guarantee absolute security. Velcro-type closures provide another simple answer to the problem. If small mating strips are placed on the insides of the pocket opening (whether pants or jacket), the result will be a reasonably secure arrangement.

BAD HABITS

If you know that your gun is properly concealed and secure yet can be instantly put into action, you will be less likely to develop some of the bad habits that plague far too many pocket pistol carriers.

Patting the Piece

“Patting the piece” is an affliction of the novice carrier. The almost unconscious, persistent pat with the hand on that part of the anatomy where the piece is carried is a tell-tale signal that you are carrying a concealed firearm. It’s a sign of insecurity—the carrier doesn’t have faith that he still has the gun on him! If you carry your pistol in various pockets, or it’s not secure and you think it could fall out, you’ll always be a patter.

Patters are easily victimized by alert, street smart gun spotters, who get the drop on them. Not all armed muggings are out for cash—copping a gun is often worth more than what’s in a wallet.

Once started, patting is a hard habit to break. Only with the confidence gained from knowing for a fact that your gun is exactly where it’s supposed to be will you gain the discipline to restrain the urge to pat the piece.

Checking Concealed Condition

More dangerous than patting the piece, checking out your gun while it’s in your pocket can turn you into a cripple. Again, this is a habit novice carriers get into when they are not secure about the condition of their pistol. Is it cocked? Is the safety on? You should know this when you first put it in your pocket. Trying to check the pistol’s condition while it’s in your pocket is a quick way to put a neat little hole in your leg.

Fondling the Firearm

The worst habit of all—often done unconsciously—is fondling the firearm. Some people just can’t restrain themselves from fondling the gun in their pocket. You could shoot yourself, or, if someone suspects you are carrying, they could shoot you first if they misconstrue your caressing as an attempt to draw your gun. Fondle in private!

POSSIBLE DANGER IN CARRYING A LOADED POCKET PISTOL

Ideally, a pocket pistol should be carried in a condition

that allows it to be put into action as quickly and easily as possible. This state of readiness is determined (and restricted) by the basic design of the pistol. A ready-to-shoot hammerless pistol has to be carried chamber-loaded, cocked, and with the thumb safety on. In this condition, only the thumb safety has to be flicked off for the gun to be fired by a trigger pull.

But beware. With a pistol in this ready-to-shoot condition, there is the possibility that it could fire accidentally if it is mishandled. Also, if you carry a pistol that is in poor mechanical condition, there is a good possibility that it could fire if it is severely jarred or dropped. However, a careful analysis of dozens of accidental firings that I have personally investigated over the past 30 or so years reveals the following:

1. All of the accidental “firings while carrying” that I have been able to verify have been caused by mishandling the pistol or by carrying it in an unsafe condition. For example, the pistol fires as it is being drawn from a pocket or purse because the carrier releases the thumb safety and inadvertently pulls the trigger before the gun is clear. This happens when there has been no preparation or training for acting under stress. Or the pistol is carried cocked and loaded with the thumb-safety *off*—an accident waiting to happen the moment the gun is grasped or fumbled.
2. The overwhelming number of pistols that fired when dropped or jarred were either older, imported junk guns that should never have been sold in the first place, or they were guns that, through wear or abuse, were in poor mechanical condition.
3. American manufacturers do extensive on-going safety tests to ensure the integrity of their pistols. A pistol that fires if it is dropped or jarred is one that fails modern manufacturing standards. I have been unable to verify any incident where a modern hammerless pistol in good mechanical condition, with a sear-blocking thumb safety that was kept on, fired accidentally when it was handled correctly, jarred, or dropped.

You can reduce the risk of having an accidental firing to almost zero by:

1. Never mishandling your pistol. This book is devoted to teaching you confident but safe handling of your self-defense weapon.
2. Never carrying a pistol that is in poor mechanical condition.

PISTOL CARRY CONDITIONS

The following describes how to prepare a pocket pistol for a given carry condition, the actions needed to shoot the gun, and comments on the desirability of carrying the pistol in that condition. There are two possible conditions in which the pistol can be carried: ready to shoot or unloaded.

Ready-to-Shoot Carry Condition

TO PREPARE:

1. Insert a full magazine.
2. Hand-cycle the slide to cock the pistol and load the first round.
3. Put the thumb safety ON.

Pistol is now in a ready-to-shoot carry condition.

TO SHOOT:

1. Thumb the safety off after the pistol is out of your pocket.
2. Pull the trigger.

After shooting, if all the rounds in the pistol have not been fired, the pistol will be cocked with a loaded round in the chamber. Put the thumb safety back ON immediately.

COMMENTS:

The ability to be able to instantly react to a life-threatening assault by having the weapon ready to shoot one-handed is, for me, the decisive reason to assume the slight risk inherent in carrying a loaded pistol. For more than 40 years, carrying various well-maintained pocket pistols, I have never been endangered by the gun itself.

Unloaded Carry Condition

If you feel that you are at risk of having an accident when carrying a pistol in a ready-to-shoot condition, then you will want to carry it in an unloaded condition, as follows:

TO PREPARE:

1. Pistol is uncocked with the thumb-safety OFF.
2. Insert a full magazine.

Pistol is now in an unloaded carry condition.

TO SHOOT:

1. Hand-cycle the slide to cock the pistol and load a round.
2. Pull the trigger.

After shooting, if all the rounds in the pistol have not been fired, the pistol will be cocked with a loaded round in the chamber. Put the thumb safety ON immediately.

COMMENTS:

Uncocked and without a round in the chamber, the pistol is as benign as a pet rock—it can't hurt you *or* an attacker. But getting the pistol into action takes both hands, and you may not have the time or both hands free to do this. Worse yet, under stress you can fumble the slide, cause a feed jam, or become confused as to the actual condition the pistol is in.

A common compromise is to routinely carry your pistol in the unloaded condition during the normal periods of one's daily life and only have it in the ready-to-shoot condition when trouble is expected. Regrettably, the gift of clairvoyance is only bestowed upon a chosen few.

For the record, a final carrying possibility is "condition zero"—loaded and cocked with the safety OFF. This is by far the quickest-into-action carry condition there is for a pistol—quicker than you might like. Carrying in this condition is an accident waiting to happen and therefore is not recommended.

CHAPTER 8

Shooting to Stay Alive

Please note: in some jurisdictions the use of a handgun in self-defense may result in adverse legal action. Legal advice is beyond the scope of this book. Therefore, in anticipation of the legal consequences of a self-defense shooting, the reader is advised to consult a competent attorney before making the decision to purchase and/or carry any firearm for any reason.

At this point in the 21st century, many of us, from kids to grandmothers, have developed pretty sharp street smarts. Being alert to danger and trying to avoid it is now second nature. But still, the street carnage escalates. Night or day, on deserted or busy streets, random attacks leave innocent citizens wounded, maimed, or dead.

It is not only the actual street that is dangerous, for the “street” expands to include stores, restaurants, bars, entertainment facilities, ballparks, elevators, public transportation, parking lots—anywhere where strangers are present. As public as these places are, they can quickly turn into your own private hell.

On the road, watching out for bad drivers is not our only concern. Carjackings and robberies, assaults and murders of drivers and passengers are now commonplace. Closer to home, family members and personal acquaintances assault, violate, and steal from those who trust them. Even the once

familiar security of the workplace is now in jeopardy. Not only do dangerous outsiders sometimes force their way into the workplace to rob and terrorize staff, disgruntled employees now commit violent attacks on fellow workers with disturbing frequency.

Strangers on the street arouse the quickest suspicion and fear and, ironically, are often the ones easiest to avoid. But family, friends, co-workers, and others who, through familiarity, have lulled your street smarts into complacency can be as brutal to you as any stranger.

Clearly, basic street smarts in public, in the workplace, or in private is not enough self-defense, which is why each year thousands more citizens decide to carry a pocket pistol at all times. But make no mistake about it—the gun alone is not the answer. Without a greatly heightened sense of street smarts on and off the street, without a keen sense of your surroundings at all times, and, most important, without a deliberately preconceived mind-set as to how you will react to danger, your gun could be useless.

ON THE STREET

Being mugged at gun or knife point the old-fashioned way, where you handed over your money and that's all there was to it, went out with the Hula Hoop. Today, you will be attacked, knocked to the ground, clubbed, stabbed, or shot—and then robbed. Or you can be trashed just for the hell of it.

Homicidal fury can be triggered because you are the wrong race or sex or for reasons that defy rationality. The most dangerous attacker and the hardest to defend against is one who doesn't care whether you live or die.

Preemptive Avoidance

It doesn't matter if street attacks are crimes of opportunity by career street thugs or random mayhem by out-of-control wackos. The only control you have over a possible assault is to know it *can* happen. The only way you can know this is

to hone your street smarts so you spot the potential attacker *before* he has targeted you.

You must be able to recognize the danger signals of a pending attack from as far away as possible and react by getting out of the way by any means possible. You need to stretch the parameters of your street smarts and learn to react quicker and sooner so that you can routinely spot potential danger at a greater distance before you are targeted.

This is easier to do on the actual street. Once you are in the restricted confines of places like stores and parking lots, you are far more vulnerable. Your spotting ability has to be in high gear so that you never get too close to trouble.

If you are unknowingly targeted at a distance, the assailant will have the initial edge. He knows in advance what he is going to do. Obviously you cannot react to his moves until you become aware of him, so it is crucial that you spot him while he is still at enough of a distance that will allow you to escape. As street smart as he is, he will still telegraph his intentions as he moves into position. Even though you are targeted, the street thug will not have irrevocably committed himself to attacking if you are still distant enough from him to be able to get out of harm's way. Once you spot him, all your energy, concentration, and fear have to be focused on getting away from him. This will be your only opportunity to escape unharmed without shooting. Move fast!

I know this advice sounds obvious, but if you fail to react soon enough to someone setting you up for trouble, and if you let the preemptive distance shrink until it becomes a crucial panic distance, you will be in real danger.

Too Close Not to Shoot

The stalker may keep his edge until he is too close and you are unable to get out of his way. Your only defense against his edge is that you are armed and will shoot to defend yourself. He does not initially know this, for if he did you would not have been selected as his victim. The instant the attacker realizes that you are armed, his edge is blunted.

But even this may not be enough of a deterrent, particularly if he is armed with any type of weapon. He has committed himself. His sudden awareness that you have a gun is not enough to stop him. His arrogant confidence has been forged by past experience with unarmed victims. He believes he can do whatever he likes to whomever he likes without fear of repercussion.

Boxed in and at a short distance from your oncoming attacker, you are in lethal danger if you don't shoot immediately. If you allow the distance between you to narrow while you hesitate with indecision, it will be too late. A determined attacker can, at 10 to 15 feet, rush in before you decide to pull the trigger and kill you in seconds with his bare hands. If he does have any type of weapon in sight, it is meant to be used on you. Whether he is armed or unarmed, you must defend yourself by shooting. It is that remaining short distance between the two of you that gives you your best chance to shoot effectively.

To Shoot

You will shoot one-handed. You will not stick your arm out to aim. Your gun will be kept close to your body. You will have your elbow tucked into your side with your hand and gun pointing from waist level at his bulk. To do this you will face your attacker straight-on so that you and your gun point directly at him. Shoot every round in your pistol, then escape to safety as quickly as possible.

Up-Close and Deadly

Whether it is on or off the street, in the workplace or in private, any up-close assault is life-threatening and very difficult to counter. If an attacker is suddenly in your face without any warning, you will be a victim if your self-defense pistol is in your pocket and not in your hand in a condition to be fired. At near arm's length there is simply not enough distance between you and your attacker to enable you to get your pistol ready to shoot. The assailant has the edge from start to finish if your gun is not in your hand.

If you do have your gun in your hand but your attacker is near arm's length before you are aware of him, you are still in grave peril. Confronted up close, your ability to shoot is greatly hampered. Although it is instinctive to react to sudden danger by fighting or fleeing, pointing a pistol and pulling the trigger are not reflexive actions, they are conscious decisions—decisions that could be impossible to execute because of the disorienting, visceral intensity of sudden surprise and fear.

Being caught with a “frozen” gun in your hand is less likely to happen if you have spent considerable time thinking through the possible reality of an up-close encounter and knowing exactly how you would respond to it. On the street, this preconceived mind-set coupled with a physically heightened expectation of danger is what is needed to be able to counter a sudden assault.

If you are not lucky enough to be able to shoot before your assailant physically reaches you, your chances for prevailing grow dim. If pain is being inflicted, you could forget that you even have a gun in your hand.

If you do shoot at arm's length or closer, it can be extremely dangerous not only to your attacker but to you. You can just as easily shoot yourself as your assailant. At arm's length you might instinctively turn your body away from your attacker and raise the arm nearest him in defense. Under extreme stress you will probably not be aware that your arm is in your line of fire. If you are being mauled, your gun could be smothered by his body, pushing the muzzle in any direction, including at your stomach or leg. Shooting yourself is a serious predicament, not a joke line. To complicate matters, a smothered pistol will be disabled after the first shot if its slide is unable to cycle.

ON THE ROAD

Carjackings, robberies, assaults, and murders of automobile drivers and passengers have received wide publicity in recent years, and most people have incorporated an aware-

ness of this possibility into their basic street smarts. That's the first step. The next and most important step is learning that you can take positive, evasive action with your car to counter threats on the road.

Always assume that any vehicle-contact incident is not an accident but a deliberate attempt to get you to stop and get out of your car, thereby making you and your car an easier target. If you are rear-ended, resist the impulse to immediately pull over and check out the damage. Keep driving, and check the rear-view mirror. If you can see that it's a little old lady or a family (adult and kids) in the car behind you, then stopping and mutually assessing the damage would not seem to be risky. But if who you see makes you nervous, or if you are in doubt and not sure how you feel, don't take the risk. Don't stop; drive to the nearest populated area. If necessary, you can always make a police report away from the scene of an accident.

If your car is disabled and you are forced to stop, do not expose yourself to opportunistic drive-by thugs. Stay locked inside and wait for the Highway Patrol to discover you. One of the best security investments you can ever make is to have a cellular phone in your car, programmed in advance to the area's Highway Patrol or applicable law enforcement agency.

The hijacking of a car at a busy stoplight, with dozens of witnesses, was once virtually unknown. Not any longer. A carjacking is a very quick, surprising event. The carjacker approaches the driver's side door unnoticed. If the door is unlocked, all he has to do is open it, punch and grab the driver, and pull him or her out, then drive off—all in less than 10 seconds.

Be alert at stoplights. Make sure all doors are locked and the windows are up. Never let yourself get boxed in—always stop a car's length behind the car in front. This will give you room to swing out on a red light and get out of harm's way if you are threatened.

While stopped, instead of vacantly staring at the red light ahead, keep a constant watch in all directions. If you see anyone, alone or in groups, approaching from any angle, don't wait for them to reach your car—make noise, honk the horn,

and move the car. If they reach you before you can move, they could shoot or throw objects through your window to gain access. At least a locked door will stall the attack if they haven't planned on breaking open the car.

The inside of a car would seem to be a protective environment, but this is a false sense of security. The protection the car offers is easily breeched by a bullet, a brick, or a tire iron if you allow yourself to be an easy target. Your wheels are your legs, only faster—use them to evade danger.

Although attacks on the road are becoming more common, most vehicle-related attacks happen when your car is parked. You are most vulnerable when preoccupied with locking or unlocking your parked car. Assailants lie in wait for those moments when, shielded by other parked cars on streets, in parking lots, or in garages, they can assault, rob, and even kidnap you in your own car. You must be on high alert when approaching your parked car or when getting out of it, with your gun hand kept free to grip your concealed pistol.

We can let the automobile force us into potentially dangerous situations. On the road, it seems we often have no choice but to use isolated gas stations and convenience stores. Sticking up these places is a national pastime, and being caught in a robbery in progress is fraught with lethal consequences.

And you *do* know how vulnerable you are with your pants down around your ankles in one of the lonely restrooms established for the care and comfort of travelers, don't you? It's enough to make you want to stay at home! On longer trips, with careful planning of your fuel and food intake, more often than not you can avoid having to use any of these questionable facilities.

Finally, keep your pistol on you at all times, not in the glove compartment.

THE WORKPLACE—NOT A SAFE HAVEN

After a tough commute, most people relax their guard once they get to work. And why not? Familiar faces and the

imposed discipline of the work routine easily put our survival instincts on auto pilot. Most gun carriers I know stash their piece the minute they get to work—in a clothes locker, a desk drawer, a briefcase or hand bag, or just in the pocket of a jacket or coat that is hung up on the back of a door or in a closet. Don't do it.

Yes, you can relax at work, and you don't need to be on high alert if strangers don't have easy access to your area. But your gun must be kept on you at all times.

If you deal face-to-face with customers, you are in the same or even a worse position than you would be on the street. Criminals or unstable people, whether in sneakers or Brooks Brothers suits, can select you to victimize in any environment. Unlike the street, you cannot avoid danger by circumventing someone who walks in that arouses your suspicion. Even if management has established a front-line defense against trouble by supplying an under-the-counter "house" gun, you must still retain the flexibility of independent self-defense by carrying your own weapon in a ready-to-shoot condition at all times.

But most workers are not employed in hazardous front-line positions, and most large companies have adequate security against criminal interlopers. It is the smaller places of employment with inadequate security that are most vulnerable. Here it is not only the stick-up artists but also rapists and murderous thrill seekers who can prey at will. Employees in smaller offices and factories are unnecessarily exposed to danger if their work areas are not locked against outsiders or if they are forced to use unlocked rest rooms located outside the main work area that strangers have access to. If you work under vulnerable circumstances like these, you need to pressure management for better security.

Workers themselves, though, can be their own worst enemies. The security offered by being among co-workers is defeated if, for example, you use the stairwell instead of the elevator or traverse company property on isolated byways instead of the customary ones. Remember, most attacks in the

workplace occur outside of the main work areas. You are vulnerable anytime you are in “perimeter” locations like hallways, walkways, stairwells, unlocked restrooms, and storage rooms. Being attacked in these places by an intruder is terrifying and difficult to counter, as it is next to impossible to take evasive action in a confined space. Any time you are away from the main work area and alone, you must be gripping your pistol concealed in your pocket so you can react instantly to danger.

The most distressing episodes of workplace violence are perpetrated by disgruntled employees, often recently terminated. Bent on revenge and armed with high-powered rifles and plenty of ammo, these maniacs have been able to force their way into big and small companies and commit a level of slaughter that was once restricted to war zones. It is small consolation to realize that these psychotic killing machines are almost always suicidal after the bloodshed.

How do you protect against this? Unquestionably your puny little pocket pistol is no match for such firepower, but if trapped under a desk and cringing in fear, at least you know you have some self-defense capability. You would have a slightly better chance of survival if you had practiced enough so you could hit a man-sized target at 25 yards.

PRIVATE LIVES—WHEN TRUST TURNS UGLY

I’ve been blessed with family and friends who have never harbored a felonious grudge against me. Everyone should be so lucky! Being terrorized by someone close to you is the ultimate nightmare.

Assaults, rapes, and homicides in private by family members or acquaintances are depressingly common. Women, as usual, are disproportionately victimized.

Avoiding the source of danger, or even recognizing danger, is often complicated by the normal social pressures that dictate our usual polite behavior. Not until things turn ugly do many people realize they are in jeopardy.

As difficult as it may be to know for a fact who is a threat to you under familiar circumstances, there will usually be signals that you must try to pick up on. If you have even the slightest thought that you would feel uncomfortable being alone with someone, never allow yourself to be alone with him, regardless of the circumstances. If you do miss the danger signals but have your pistol on you, you stand a good chance of being able to stop aggression in its tracks.

THE FALLACY OF GUN INTIMIDATION

Can you intimidate a would-be attacker and cause him to back off by threatening to shoot?

If you have a gun that is big enough to be instantly recognized as a lethal weapon and, more importantly, if you are capable of projecting the resolute conviction that you will shoot if you are not obeyed, it is possible for you to short-circuit an attack.

But, unless you have a forceful personality, preferably one cultivated by a military or law enforcement background, and unless you have a gun bigger than a cigarette lighter in your hand, you will most likely *not* be able to influence events by threatening, out of fear, to shoot. In fact, almost every time I hear gun owners propose this course of action, I sense they are laboring under an illusion. They think that by merely brandishing a gun and threatening to shoot they can stop an attack.

They are deluded by the symbol of power—the gun. For them, possession alone is protection. Unconsciously they are looking for a way out that doesn't involve shooting. They are not prepared to, and don't want to shoot anyone—period.

Threatening to shoot when you know, deep in your heart, that you are unable to pull the trigger, is nothing more than a plea for mercy. If you accept the responsibility to carry a gun, you must be convinced that your life is worth more than the life of someone who wants to maim or kill you. Only then will courage outweigh fear and give you the strength to rightfully defend yourself by pulling the trigger in a life-or-death situation.

APPENDIX

Ammunition

Where and What to Buy

THE THREE MAJOR American ammunition manufacturers only sell through distributors/dealers. If there is a particular brand you need and can't find, contact the manufacturer for the name of a distributor/dealer that services your area.

Recommended ammo and their stock numbers are given for each manufacturer.

FMJ = Full Metal Jacket
JHP = Jacketed Hollow Point

Federal Cartridge Company
900 Ehlen Drive
Anoka, MN 55303

- .22 LR: Federal Classic High Velocity, Copper Plated, stock #710
- .25 Auto (premium): Federal Classic FMJ, stock #C25AP
- .25 Auto (budget): Federal American Eagle Brand FMJ, stock #AE25AP
- .32 Auto (premium): Federal Classic FMJ, stock #C32AP
- .32 Auto (premium): Federal "Premium" Hydra-Shok JHP, stock #P32HS1

- .32 Auto (budget): Federal American Eagle Brand FMJ, stock #AE32BP
 - .380 Auto (premium): Federal Classic FMJ, stock #C380AP
 - .380 Auto (premium): Federal “Premium” Hydra-Shok JHP, stock #PD380HS1
 - .380 Auto (budget): Federal American Eagle Brand FMJ, stock #AE380AP
-

Remington Arms Company, Inc.
870 Remington Drive
Madison, NC 27025

- .22 LR: Remington “Golden Bullet” High Velocity Copper Plated, stock #1522
 - .25 Auto (premium): Remington FMJ, stock #R25AP
 - .25 Auto (budget): Remington UMC Brand FMJ, stock #L25AP
 - .32 Auto (premium): Remington FMJ, stock #R32AP
 - .32 Auto (budget): Remington UMC Brand FMJ, stock #L32AP
 - .380 Auto (premium): Remington FMJ, stock #R380AP
 - .380 Auto (premium): Remington Golden Saber JHP, stock #GS380B
 - .380 Auto (budget): Remington UMC Brand FMJ, stock #L380AP
-

Winchester Div., Olin Corp.
427 N. Shamrock Street
East Alton, IL 62024

- .22 LR: Winchester Super-X High Velocity “Lubaloy” coated, stock #X22LR
- .25 Auto (premium): Winchester Super-X Expanding Point (Round Nose), stock #X25AXP

- .25 Auto (budget): Winchester USA Brand FMJ, stock #Q4203
- .32 Auto (premium): Winchester Super-X Silvertip JHP, stock #32ASHP
- .32 Auto (budget): Winchester USA Brand FMJ, stock #Q4255
- .380 Auto (premium): Winchester Super-X Silvertip JHP, stock #X380ASHP
- .380 Auto (budget): Winchester USA Brand FMJ, stock #Q4206

MAIL ORDER AMMO SUPPLIERS

These companies carry Federal, Remington, and Winchester ammunition. (See manufacturer listings above for stock numbers for recommended ammo.) Their mail order catalogs also include gun care/cleaning products.

Ammo Depot
P.O. Box 3254
Alton, IL 62002

Cheap Shot, Inc.
4700 Clairton Blvd., Suite 101
Pittsburgh, PA 15236

Graf & Sons, Inc.
4050 S. Clark
Mexico, MO 65265

Northeast Shooters' Warehouse
P.O. Box 429
Derby Line, VT 05830

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Small-caliber handguns are often maligned as too puny for serious self-defense, but millions of Americans own and carry these guns *and have used them successfully* to stop violent assaults. This is the first book ever devoted to eliminating the many misconceptions about the usefulness of these popular guns.

“Pocket pistols” are small, easily concealed, inexpensive semiautomatic handguns in .22, .25, .32, and .380 calibers. Their small size and hammerless design enable them to be easily concealed and carried so they are immediately accessible in an emergency. Their purpose is not to knock an assailant off his feet with fire-breathing power (which *no* handgun is capable of doing) but simply to deter or stop his assault by putting firepower instantly in your hands.

Concealable Pocket Pistols addresses every aspect of owning, carrying, and shooting small-caliber handguns in a realistic manner. It cuts right to the chase and recommends a handful of the best pistols on the market today as well as the best ammunition for them. It then gets into the real-world issues of how to carry a concealed pocket pistol, how to shoot it under stress, and how to deal with malfunctions quickly and efficiently.

In an emergency, a small-caliber pistol in the pocket is better than the .357 Magnum left at home. Find out what millions of Americans already know about these practical self-defense tools.

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ISBN: 978-1-56160-279-1



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